

State of Edgefield County Report

We are turning a corner, but the work has just begun

By Dean Campbell
Edgefield County Council Chairman

Edgefield County Council took significant steps to move Edgefield County forward in 2011. The groundwork is now in place to help us accelerate the pace to make our County an even better place to live and work.

It all starts with trust the citizens must have in its County Government. Toward that end, we have gone to great lengths to be more open, more transparent and more accessible than ever before. That work includes:

- Several website changes, including a “financial transparency” link, were made to allow citizens to see exactly what the County spends money on, as well as a “citizen request” link so citizens can directly ask questions of County Government – and get an answer.
- Agendas for Council, boards and commission meetings are now all on-line and usually available several days prior to the meetings.
- Working to post ordinances on our website before we debate them, so you can read them ahead of time, provide input and better understand what we are trying to do.
- Changing our County Council agendas to make them more “user friendly” by putting a simple explanation on the agenda for each item to summarize in layman’s terms what it means.

In addition, as Council Chairman, I have held a half dozen town hall meetings in every area (some of them included other Council members as well), as well as a half dozen breakfast meetings. I also began a monthly newsletter to give you more insights than what the news media reports offer. Based on the overwhelming positive response to all of these initiatives, I plan to continue these elements of accessibility and openness in 2012.

Finally, in the spirit of keeping you informed, I wanted to present this first State of Edgefield County Report because you deserve to know how your tax dollars are being spent.

While your trust in County Council is critical, everything we do should boil down to results. In 2011, we terminated the contract of one Administrator and hired an Interim Administrator, Roger LeDuc. We also hired Lynn Strom as an Assistant Administrator. (At our January 3 meeting, we promoted her to Administrator effective March 7.) The Administrator’s role is significant in County Government. I thank Roger and Lynn, plus all County employees, for the work they did in 2011 to make this an incredibly successful year.

Having solid leadership that works together – both in terms of staff and Council members – opens the door to opportunities. That means that we have accomplished more than you may have realized in 2011, including many big-ticket items that were long overdue, including:

- Putting in place a plan to build a much-needed animal shelter in Edgefield County.
- Issuing a \$750,000 bond for new police vehicles.
- Purchasing 2 new ambulances from designated reserves funds.
- Finding 40% savings on inmate meals, saving about \$115,000 yearly.
- Completing a new redistricting plan for County Council districts.
- Securing funding and approving plans for the total renewal of the E-911 center.
- Settling several long-term overdue taxes that were owed to the County.
- Implementing a new way of handling our mail service, saving over \$7,000.
- Revising health benefits for all new employees to be more in line with what businesses use.
- Installing new playground equipment at Edgefield Park.
- Developing a County Safety Committee to help reduce our worker compensation claims, which will ultimately save taxpayers' money.
- Consolidating all purchasing through a credit-card program and streamlined payment processing.
- Overhauling our janitorial program, saving over \$11,000 annually.
- Providing a full-time building maintenance program with an estimated savings of \$20,000 yearly.
- Completing an assessment of all the County roads, and developing an action plan to eliminate bridge and roadway hazards.
- Selling nearly \$100,000 of old County equipment and vehicles over the internet.
- Approving an employee suggestion/reward program, which will save the County money.
- Starting a Strategic Plan for the County, which should be completed and presented to County Council in March.
- Approving a new active, working economic development committee.
- Meeting with most existing industries to better understand their needs, since they create most new jobs in our County.

That's quite an impressive list, and those are just the highlights! We will have more on the plate in 2012, particularly as it relates to the Strategic Plan, now under development. I encourage you to actively participate in the plan.

As a County, we have been very successful in improving the lives of our citizens, putting into place plans for future economic growth, and not raising taxes.

I thank Council Members Rodney Ashcraft, Genia Blackwell, Willie Bright and Norman Dorn for working together to ensure Edgefield County is prepared to step-up the pace for creating a bright future for Edgefield County.

You shouldn't expect anything less.